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THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Identical letters dated 24 September 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement adopted on 23 September 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the recent events in the areas of northern Afghanistan bordering Uzbekistan (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 43, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Alisher VOHIDOV
Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Uzbekistan
to the United Nations

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ANNEX

[Original: Russian]

Statement issued on 23 September 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan concerning recent events in areas of northern Afghanistan bordering on Uzbekistan

As has been already noted, fierce clashes between armed detachments of the "Taliban" movement and forces opposed to it have been observed recently in northern Afghanistan. According to the information that we are receiving, there have been heavy casualties and large-scale destruction.

As a result of the hostilities, the town of Khairaton, situated directly on the frontier with Uzbekistan, was seized by the Taliban forces. Control of the areas where the armed clashes are occurring at the present time has periodically passed back and forth between the opposing sides.

In the mutual shelling of positions of the conflicting parties in the territory of Afghanistan, several shells fell in territory adjacent to Afghanistan and four citizens were wounded. The border troops of Uzbekistan, together with forces of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic and local authorities, are taking the necessary steps to safeguard the frontier and to ensure calm and stability in the districts bordering on Afghanistan.

The events of recent days, which took place in areas directly bordering on Uzbekistan, have once again vindicated the earlier decision by Uzbekistan's leaders to close the bridge over the Amudar'ya River, which links our territory with northern Afghanistan, where recently sudden confrontations and hostile clashes occurred between opposing forces. Consequently, Uzbekistan has not only secured its territory, but has also demonstrated its neutrality and non-interference in the confrontations in the northern parts of Afghanistan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan states that everything that has been taking place in Afghanistan is an exclusively internal matter of that country. Uzbekistan's position concerning the settlement of the Afghan conflict remains unchanged and consists of the following:

- First, preservation of the territorial integrity of Afghanistan;
- Second, rejection of a solution of the conflict by military means;
- Third, an end to outside interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan;
- Fourth, the imposition of a strict embargo on arms deliveries to the area of the conflict;

- Fifth, participation by all major forces involved in the conflict in a phased peace process with the aim of forming a coalition Government on the basis of broad representation;

- Sixth, holding of peace negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations and with the participation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference;

- The formation of a contact group for this purpose, comprising representatives of the countries bordering on Afghanistan, of the United States of America and of the Russian Federation, and also representatives of the opposing forces in Afghanistan.

The Republic of Uzbekistan calls upon the parties to the conflict to demonstrate mutual goodwill and to put an end to this fratricidal war, with the aim of preserving the statehood of Afghanistan and establishing a firm and lasting peace in the interests of the welfare and prosperity of the Afghan people.